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ABSTRACT

This paper reports on the results of two projects developed at Madonna University (Michigan) in response to a need to forge a link between humanities educators and teacher preparation faculty and between the University and K-12 educators in the surrounding community. The primary vehicle for achieving these goals was reading and discussing humanities texts, using themes that emerged from the texts as a basis for developing a discourse community. The project identified two critical steps in moving toward a more integrated vision of teacher preparation: (1) faculty professional development activities aimed at creating an interdisciplinary learning community focused on integrating the humanities and teacher preparation; and (2) course development to forge formal curricular linkages between key humanities general education courses and required courses in the teacher preparation program. Initially, faculty colloquia developed an intellectual discourse community on campus that met once every 6 weeks; two summer workshops were also held. In addition, two new courses were developed in the Department of English and Communication under the aegis of the project. Over the 2-year project period, focus shifted from faculty development within the university to a more community-oriented, K-12 approach, with the Madonna humanities professors and K-12 teachers working as a team for a year, visiting one another's classrooms and working on curricular units. Teams have reported that the pedagogical insights and exchange of ideas have been extremely enriching. (NAV)

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Alternative Approaches to Educating for Diversity:

The Madonna University Model

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Collaborative Strategies for Integrating the Humanities and Teacher Preparation

The call for educational reform is in the air--resounding throughout the continuum from preschool to graduate school. For higher education, this has meant a challenge to demonstrate the relevance of the university degree to a society in the throes of a values revolution. The collective societal voice asks, "What difference does it make if someone graduates from a community college, vocational school, or university if that person cannot apply his or her knowledge in the work force and function as a contributing member of society?" This and similar questions have prompted Secretary of Labor Robert Reich to observe, "It has never been more critical that we cultivate the common ground between school and college, education and work" (6).

The mood of the times presents particular challenges to humanities educators, who, in order to justify their place in the educational world, must leave the ivory tower and work in the trenches to ensure that humanities education is engaging and relevant to all students, to their lives, and, ultimately, to society. This idea was the impetus for humanities faculty at Madonna University (Livonia, MI) to develop two projects that forge linkages between humanities educators and teacher preparation faculty and between the University and K-12 educators. The primary vehicle for achieving these goals is reading and discussing humanities texts, using the

themes that emerge from these texts as a basis for developing a discourse community.

I. Framing Ideas and Values of the NEH Project

In *The Good Society*, Robert Bellah and his collaborators observe that: "Almost all university faculty members are more oriented to their disciplines than to the educational purposes of their institutions" (177). For Bellah *et al.*, education contributes to the creation of the good society--a society characterized by the "pursuit of good in common," resulting in what he calls the classical ideals of peace, prosperity, freedom, virtuous conduct, and justice. Because of this link, schools, from K-12 through graduate school, are crucial to achieving a coherent social vision. As a prerequisite for higher education to contribute to the process of manifesting the good society, "the [university] faculty itself [must] become a learning community of mutually intelligible interpreters" (171); that is, faculty members must leave the narrow boundaries of their disciplines and enter into discourse with colleagues who share responsibility for the educational purposes of their institutions.

Given Bellah's orientation, his text was chosen as the first reading in the Madonna University Humanities Colloquium Series, the centerpiece of the University's first two-year project, entitled "Integrating the Humanities and Teacher Preparation," partially funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities. The goal of this project was to foster a sense of shared responsibility for the preparation of teachers among the faculties of the traditional humanities disciplines--English, history, foreign languages, philosophy, and the fine arts--and the faculty of the teacher preparation program. The need for dialogue and greater collaboration between these two areas (and with in-service K-12 teachers) became apparent during the University's participation in a two-year project sponsored by the American Association of Colleges and

Universities (AAC&U). Focused on strengthening the humanities foundations of teachers, the project exposed the need for establishing a more integrated educational experience for prospective teachers built on a common knowledge base in the humanities (including the use of classical and multicultural texts) as a means of enriching the quality of teaching of these students as they graduate and enter Michigan's schools.

The project identified two critical steps in moving toward a more integrated vision of teacher preparation: (1) faculty professional development activities aimed at creating an interdisciplinary learning community focused on integrating the humanities and teacher preparation and (2) course development to forge formal curricular linkages between key humanities general education courses and required courses in the teacher preparation program. Ultimately, this project aimed at moving faculty members from disciplinary isolation into an interdisciplinary community engaged in conversation about multiple perspectives on the nature of learning, diverse ways of knowing, and the role and value of education in our society. The primary means of achieving this goal was the shared experience of interpreting texts, particularly literary texts. As participants gained a common language of allusion and metaphor and established common reference points, disciplinary concerns retreated into the background and issues of common concern commanded their attention. The most important outcome of the project has been a greater sense of shared values and the willingness to develop a more collaborative model for teacher preparation. Figure 1 graphically represents the points of collaboration for the project.

The humanities disciplines form the heart of liberal education, enriching the teacher preparation student with an more expansive view of the world and the ability to adapt to changing paradigms. Michigan colleague, Arnold Revzin, has articulated the aims of liberal education in

the following way:

> A liberal education provides the framework needed to deal with change and uncertainty. It stimulates curiosity and creativity, and equips the student for lifelong learning experiences. A liberal education affords continuity in a world in which there is an explosion of new knowledge, and in which the relationship between a college degree and a job is uncomfortably tenuous. (15)

The best education for future educators would militate against the false dichotomy of liberal versus career education and integrate the two so that students see the connectedness between ideas and action, recognize coherence in their world and their lives, and synthesize the whole into a sense of the meaning of things. The project aimed in this direction and is perhaps one of the first steps--but a crucial step--in realizing the vision that Bellah holds up as an ideal.

II. Major Achievements of "Integrating the Humanities and Teacher Preparation"

As we prepare student humanists to become teachers, the need to understand the connections and intersections of culture becomes clear. When one of our recent graduates in the humanities begins his or her first full-time teaching position, it will likely be in a school that articulates a world curriculum to a multicultural student body. In the past, neither the academic training nor the personal experiences of most young teachers were likely to allow them to be effective and successful in such an environment. Both the AAC&U and NEH projects provided the opportunities to create professional development initiatives to forge a number of connections between groups that have not always communicated as much or as well as they should: humanities professors and education professors; university professors, K-12 teachers, and student

teachers; teacher education professors and teachers and administrators working at all levels. The project essentially mandated a period of consideration and contemplation of both content and pedagogy in humanities instruction through its four activities: (1) a faculty colloquium series; (2) two summer workshops; (3) a professors in the schools program; (4) the creation of two new courses. Figure two represents the impact of the project on the students in the teacher preparation program.

Faculty colloquia developed an intellectual discourse community on campus that came together once every six weeks to discuss a humanities or education text that provides insight into contemporary culture, either from a critical and scholarly perspective (Gates, *Canon Wars*; Schlesinger, *The Disuniting of America*; West, *Race Matters*) or from the artistic import of a novel (Boyle, *East is East*; Silko, *Ceremony*). We effectively raised the level of discourse on campus even as we have made personal and intellectual communication across the disciplines. The weather remains a hot topic on campus--surrounded as Michigan is by Great Lakes, our weather is a great source of entertainment, not to say drama, at times--but next month's or last month's colloquium text entered the conversation at the coffee machine, in the hallway, and indeed quite naturally and appropriately in the classroom.

Two summer workshops provided a two-week intensive engagement with major texts and approaches in the humanities. We read and studied classical works (Plato, Sophocles) to determine a classical ethos of the social contract, especially with reference to education and governance. The classical texts provided a workable context for our study in the second week of Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*. The second workshop allowed us to continue the process connecting cultures through study of African, Japanese, and Islamic cultures and literatures. In

each case, the workshops included a group visit to the Detroit Institute of Arts conducted by an art historian, in order to extend the conversation from word-bound texts to the fine arts.

The participants of the summer workshops described the effect of the workshops in terms of achieving the goals of the project:

> The workshop has been one of the best experiences I've had at Madonna. Rarely do we have a chance to create this type of forum, let alone sustain its creative momentum over a two-week period. The workshop encouraged interactions and exchange. We were constantly taken back to the issue of teaching the humanities, what we might try to accomplish and how we might go about it.
>
> . . .
>
> I feel that I'm part of a new learning community, sharing a vision of our educational purposes, especially in regard to teacher preparation.

It is evident that the focus on humanities texts provided an effective mechanism for enhancing the ability of both humanities and teacher preparation faculty members to develop a more integrated understanding of their own and their colleagues' role in the education of future teachers.

The Humanities Professors in the Schools program, which will be discussed more fully, is relevant in this context because of the content discussion that generally occurs in the interactions between the university professor and the K-12 teacher. Many K-12 teachers are not involved in the text selection process and are, essentially, denied an prerogative of their professional role and status, which they might do well to address. It has been exceptionally fruitful for educators on both sides of the high school-higher education bridge to see which texts

are taught in their field at the corresponding level and what sort of rationale informed the text selection.

Finally, two new courses were developed under the aegis of the project in cooperation with the Department of English and Communication Arts. Each of the proposed upper division literature courses, Classics of African-American Literature and Voices of Pluralism in Literature, will be offered once per year, and all English majors will be required to complete at least one of the courses. Although many of the texts to be used in the courses may have been taught in one of the American or world literature survey courses, such a semester-long course in these previously marginalized areas should help to prepare our future teachers to be multiculturally literate.

In the process of these endeavors, we found, at times, that in our attempts to connect with the other, such as in our reading of *Invisible Man*, we encounter a personality that is all too familiar; on the other hand, while we approached Plato and Sophocles with the reverent acknowledgment that most cultures reserve for visits to the grave sites of esteemed ancestors, most of us found conceptions of the Athenian democracy to be incongruous, if not distasteful, because of its exclusivity--thus communicating a fuller sense of the "other" than we had anticipated. Perhaps in thinking that we were connecting with the "other," we found a part of ourselves; then, expecting to find ourselves and our students in foundational works of Western culture, we began to recognize the need to prepare our students with the critical and interpretive structures to learn across disciplines and cultures, while also imbuing them with the confidence and humility to accept unexpected or even unpopular conclusions.

The external consultant-evaluators for the project, Thomas Lasley, professor of education,

and Michael Payne, professor of philosophy, both of University of Dayton, acknowledged the project's success in meeting its objectives:

> The NEH grant has clearly enabled faculty to create cross-disciplinary connections that would not have been possible without some level of external funding. Several faculty members commented that although they always felt comfortable with colleagues from other disciplines, the NEH project was enabling them to develop associations that were stronger and that offered much greater potential for enhancing the quality of faculty dialogue about teacher education. The dialogue (or community of discourse) engenders more involvement and reduces isolation, and it fosters the possibility of real change.
>
> . . .
>
> One of the real strengths of your project is the involvement as teachers and administrative personnel from area schools. The latter group (administrators) is especially significant. . .We were impressed with the teacher cohort you now have participating.

As the project evolved over the two-year period, the focus gradually shifted from faculty professional development within the University to a more outward movement opening up to the community and K-12 schools. This came to be seen as possessing the richest potential for making significant impact on the quality of teaching and learning in the humanities and resulted in team teaching, reciprocal class visitations, co-written humanities modules, and classroom and school-wide events such as theme fairs and celebrations that brought the humanities to the attention of school administrators and parents. The success of this activity motivated the

participants to develop a follow-up project specifically focused on K-12 teachers and administrators.

III. Crossing Boundaries between Higher Education and K-12 Schools

As we thought about providing future teachers with a stronger grounding in the humanities, we considered how we could build bridges across the parallel streams which inform professional practice. Higher education is one training ground for teachers. Likewise, the K-12 classroom offers a rich training ground through experiential opportunities to learn, react, and develop skills while interacting with students. Surely, these two worlds of education should be communicating with one another.

Crossing the boundaries between the academy and the K-12 schools is an essential component of teacher preparation. Future teachers need to be able to connect the philosophies, ideas, concepts, and skills of the higher education classroom with students in K-12 classrooms in concrete and abstract ways that make sense to the learners. As Ernest Boyer points out:

> Today no one seriously doubts that higher education has a responsibility to work closely with schools. Colleges and universities with all their talent and resources can no longer be spectators. Many of our classrooms are filled with students who are falling by the wayside, dropping out. Many others, who do make it to graduation, lack the requisite skills for further education, for effective citizenship, and for success in life.
>
> I am convinced that we must, in the next five years, immerse ourselves in collaboration. The time has come to

acknowledge that education is a seamless web and that all levels of education are inextricably connected.

After the institutional boundaries are crossed between higher education and K-12 schools, once there is a working relationship between two groups of faculty and administrators, another boundary crossing presents itself: the integration of humanities text and discourse into the world of the K-12 classroom teacher. Yet this boundary is more difficult to span.

Humanities educators in Michigan and elsewhere are concerned about the relatively low priority placed in humanities education in comparison to the importance of standardized test scores in basic skills. They also see a growing emphasis on employability skills over reflective and speculative habits of mind. Classroom teachers feel increasing pressure to abandon the content and methodologies of the traditional humanities disciplines to "teach to the test." This has become such a priority for some local districts that curricula are being redesigned, and more and more valuable class time is given over to practice and drill for the test. This means that teachers have a crucial need to use the time they can devote to ideas and cultures as effectively as possible, to be clear sighted about the goals of humanities education, and to be prepared to engage students in activities that capture their imagination and connect to their lives in relevant ways.

The project rested in the idea that higher education humanities faculty can provide meaningful professional development experiences for the harried K-12 teacher, addressing the need to re-commit and re-arm teachers to meet the challenge to humanities education. Higher education faculty have a wealth of insight to offer K-12 teachers; yet with the pressures from school district, state, and national initiatives, teachers may not perceive the offerings for

professional development in the humanities to be attractive. If teachers were to choose a professional development opportunity, they would most likely choose one related to a hot topic in their district, such as performance assessment or Howard Gardner's multiple intelligences rather than one related to humanities education, however clever the packaging and marketing might be!

Therefore, it becomes even more imperative for humanists to promote more aggressively the benefits of the humanities for preparing students to become reflective citizens who are comfortable with other times and other cultures and who have perspectives on how we come to know ourselves and others through reading, reflection, and conversation about the lived human experiences evoked by literary, artistic, and other humanities texts. Many teachers lose this perspective in the daily bustle of other agendas.

The Humanities Professors in the Schools component of the project arose from the conviction that those who teach future teachers need to experience what the students will be experiencing in their field placements, in student teaching, and in their first teaching assignments. During this collaboration, the Madonna humanities professors became familiar with the pedagogical demands of the K-12 teacher and, in a reciprocal way, had the opportunity to share their own content expertise with teachers and students in the school setting. The humanities faculty and K-12 teacher worked as a team for a year, visiting one another's classrooms and working on curricular units.

The teams reported that the pedagogical insights and exchange of ideas have been extremely enriching. One Madonna humanities professor commented on the effective use of technology such as CD-ROM and the success of collaborative learning groups in a high school

classroom. She read student papers and talked with the students about their writing and worked on team teaching and unit planning. The sharing of expertise created an incentive for each faculty member to examine more closely and enhance approaches to teaching and content.

Through our relationships with K-12 teachers and classrooms we more fully understand that the preparation of future teachers must be connected, in a true two-directional collaboration, with the professional development of current teachers. Our particular perspectives, when joined, enhance the learning opportunities for students and reinforce a focus not only on the technical aspects of education but on higher order thinking, critical analyses of social and intellectual issues, and examination of the human condition so richly addressed in humanities texts.

IV. Follow-Up Project Aimed at K-12 Teachers

Because of the success of the first project, Madonna University has essentially replicated its activities with a group of 24 K-12 teachers and administrators, beginning in fall 1995. The new project also includes development of focus teams that work in local school districts to re-energize humanities education at the K-12 level. Each team is designing a mini-project to address a critical need, brought to fruition during the two years of the project. In this way the impact of the effort extends beyond the participant group and directly affects the quality of humanities education experienced by students in local school districts. As the University faculty enter new collaborative relationships with fellow humanities educators at the K-12 level, the artificial barriers that separate the two spheres dissolve, resulting in a clearer sense of the role each plays in the continuum of humanities education. The primary beneficiary of this effort is society at large, enriched by a citizenry that appreciates the value of the humanities to expand our view of the world and illuminate our most compelling problems. In this way, the humanities contribute

to the mission of bringing the "good society" into being.

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[Listed in Order of Reading]

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